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## **Vandals cause serious damage to major power lines, disrupt interstate commerce**

**BPA offers up to \$1,000 for information**

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### **Bonneville Power Administration**

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**MEHAMA, Ore.** — The reckless antics of gun-shooting vandals resulted in one of the most serious incidents of insulator damage along one of Bonneville Power Administration's (BPA) major power lines over the weekend of Sept. 13. BPA is offering up to \$1,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of those who caused an estimated \$5,500 worth of damage to the Buckley - Marion and Ashe - Marion transmission lines located in southeast Marion County.

These two incidents occurred approximately five miles from Mehama. On Sunday evening, transmission maintenance crews were called to the area after the Buckley - Marion 500,000-volt power line was tripped out of service. Crews discovered additional insulator damage one-half mile from the site they were initially called to repair. Twenty out of 23 insulators had been shot from the Buckley - Marion transmission tower, and an additional 17 out of 23 insulators were shot from the Ashe - Marion #2 500,000-volt power line which was knocked out of service while maintenance crews were in the area.

"We don't have any suspects at this time, but it is very likely we are looking for juveniles who enjoy shooting at insulators," said BPA Security Specialist Gail Dreckman. "High voltage power lines pose enormous risk to anyone who shoots at them. Downed power lines can cause fires and lethal ground voltages can kill or injure the vandals and others in the area."

Even though BPA was able to avoid an outage by providing alternate pathways for electrical power while making necessary repairs, the incidents caused a 300 megawatt reduction in power transfers between California and Oregon. Disruptions such as this can have severe economic consequences for all parties. Loss of this line could have caused a major power outage for millions of customers that receive their power as a result of being connected to the system.

BPA annually spends between \$400,000 and \$500,000 to replace insulators damaged or destroyed by gunshot vandalism. These costs get passed on to customers and ratepayers. Above and beyond these monetary costs and inconveniences are the possible disruption of essential services -- fire departments, police and ambulance services -- that depend on reliable electric service.

Under its popular neighborhood watch-style Crime Witness Program, BPA offers cash rewards up to \$1,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of perpetrators. Since 1994, the Crime Witness Program has generated hundreds of telephone tips resulting in dozens of arrests, recovered property, and most importantly, deterrence of future crime. Informants can call toll free 1-800-437-2744 and their identity will be kept confidential.

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